

SHERMAN COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT

BOARD WORK SESSION

SEPTEMBER 24, 2012

The Board of Directors of Sherman County School District held a Board Work Session at the Sherman County Public/School Library, in Moro, OR, on September 24, 2012. The following were present: Chair, Ken Melzer, Members, Verna Simantel, Liz Mills, Ted vonBorstel, Bill Martin, Superintendent, Wes Owens, Business Manager, Kim McKinney, Secretary, Linda Burnett, Principals Brandon Hammond, Mike Somnis, Visitors: Tom Finch

CALL TO ORDER

Chair, Ken Melzer opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag at 6:45 PM.

Review of 2012-13 Sherman County School Board Priorities and Points of Emphasis: Mr. Owens began with thanks for the time board members are giving to be here tonight. He reminded the board of the purpose of meeting tonight, which is to gain information that will help the board members make an informed decision at their target date. This date was identified as one of the District Priorities and Points of Emphasis. "By Nov. 20, 2012, the Sherman County School Board will make a decision whether to develop a comprehensive plan to consolidate the District to one campus in Moro and report these findings to the Sherman County Community or to continue with current configuration. These findings might also include specific triggers."

WORK SESSION FRAMEWORK

Mr. Owens presented some suggestions, ideas, and thoughts for the work session. (see attachment)

PRESENTATION OF SURVEY GIVEN STAFF

Mr. Owens gave a Review of Previous Data and Surveys:

Question presented to staff on August 28, 2012: What information would you need to know to make an informed decision regarding a single campus (consolidation K – 12)?

- **FINANCIAL:** What exactly will it cost to build and how much money will be saved? Where will the money come from?
- **DESIGN OF NEW BUILDING:** Huge concerns about storage from every group. Will there be a separate gym, cafeteria, computer lab, playground, health room? Teachers want to help design their classrooms, be involved in the process and ensure the architecture style is pleasing.
- **PLAN FOR THE CURRENT ELEMENTARY BUILDING** – staff wants to know what will happen to the old building
- **STUDENT SEPARATION/CONFIGURATION:** Questions about older/younger student separation.
- **EMOTION – STAFF AND COMMUNITY:** Concern about staff reduction. Concerns for the loss of the school to the Grass Valley community. A plan for the current elementary building is recommended. Concern about declining population – is now the time?

STAFF PROS AND CONS

SUMMARY OF DISTRICT GROUP FORMAT QUESTIONS

ADVANTAGES OF A SINGLE CAMPUS

PROS

Expanded Resources for All Grades

Better use of new library, opportunities for high school aids and mentors, shared expertise and materials, more options for advanced grade school students

Teacher Collaboration/Staff Unity

Possible Cost Savings

From Staff reduction, program consolidation reduced busing, reduced staff mileage and paid travel time (music, PE, counselor, speech kitchen)

Transportation

Less time for some students on bus

Improved Jr. High Sports Program

Unity for 5th – 8th graders

Likely Increased Parent Involvement

Better for Parents and Students

More centralized travel for parents, less transition stress for 6th graders

DISADVANTAGES OF A SINGLE CAMPUS

CONS

Job Loss

Upfront Cost

Loss of Good Building

Mixing Older with Younger

Construction Timeline

Community Impact

It may hurt the Grass Valley community

ONE CAMPUS CONFIGURATION THOUGHTS/POSSIBILITIES (2009)

Mr. Owens presented thoughts and possibilities he had prepared in 2009 regarding the One Campus Configuration. (See attachment)

DISTRIBUTION OF NEW INFORMATIONAL MATERIALS

Mr. Owens presented a brief overview of some potential savings to move to one campus. (See attachment) He also showed the board a 'real-time' picture of the time left before the date for the decision to be made:

Countdown to Decision:

Nov. 20

Nov. 13 (1 week)

Oct. 8 (6 weeks)

Sept. 24 (8 weeks)

MID COLUMBIA TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Tom Finch presented a map showing the location of where elementary students live within the county. His map showed 13 elementary students in Grass Valley and South of Grass Valley. The rest of the elementary students are all north of Grass Valley. He then presented a letter showing the cost saving from Mid Columbia Bus Company if the schools were consolidated in Moro. Mr. Finch discussed the benefits of housing the bus company here (at the school site) as opposed to in Wasco. Routes could be reconfigured, some could be shortened, and one might be cut altogether.

BOARD DISCUSSION

Chair Ken Melzer discussed the options for the decision making process. He pointed out the public's need to have their say, i.e. City Council Meetings, public forums, etc. Member Bill Martin wanted everyone on the Board to be clear that the 20th is not a time when the Board will say HOW the process will be done, just that it will (or will not) be done. He also pointed out that knowing what to do with the building at Grass Valley is a very important part of the process. Member Ted vonBorstel reported that community people have questioned him about what was done with the previous (Rufus, Wasco) buildings. Member Bill Martin continued to insist 'what to do with the building' must be a part of the comprehensive plan. Member Ted vonBorstel believes that people in Grass Valley understand the building will eventually close. Chair Ken Melzer asked the Board if they want to hold workshops (or public meetings) in the near future to hear the public's input regarding the process. Superintendent Wes Owens described those possible meetings as informative, and as giving an opening for the community to speak regarding the decision making process. He advised the Board they would need to plan those meetings, and have a planned forum for them. Chair Ken Melzer suggested that at the next two board meetings, this decision making process be an item on the agenda, and open it to the public for discussion. Superintendent Wes Owens suggested the board meetings be held one in Grass Valley, and one in Wasco. He also suggested himself and each member make personal visits to community meetings for transparency. Chair Ken Melzer suggested each board member make an effort to attend city council meetings this (and next) month, asking for a time on their agenda to speak briefly.

CONFIRMATION OF BOARD POSITION

Chair Ken Melzer and Member Verna Simantel both stated they are both in favor of consolidating, they are wondering WHEN? They feel the evidence and data are showing the need, the decision just needs to be made. Member Verna Simantel mentioned she appreciated seeing the data presented, feeling that it justified in her mind, the need to consolidate. She sees it as a positive move. Member Liz Mills expressed that she has an open mind about the need for this move. She has not seen a reason WHY NOT! She felt that the reasons we are looking for were all given in the Strategic Plan. Member Ted vonBorstel presented two concerns he has in the consolidation process: 1. Need for permanent facility (not a trailer on wheels), the need to see a facility that will also house gym facilities at the Sherman Jr. Sr. High School Site. (Either better use of the facility we have, or add to what we have) 2. Discuss options for use of the building in Grass Valley. He feels the people in Grass Valley deserve to know what the plan is for that building. Member Bill Martin agreed with Member Ted vonBorstel. He feels we need to look BEYOND the process. He believes there are no reasons "educationally" NOT to move, but dealing with the building in Grass Valley is of utmost importance. He does

want to give the public lots of information regarding the process. He wonders if there is anything more to quantify what makes this a better educational benefit for the students. He can see the fiscal efficiency in the endeavor. Superintendent Wes Owens feels the board needs to come up with some important talking points that they can easily present when people ask them what the reasons would be for the move.

BOARD DISCUSSION

Member Verna Simantel pointed out one difference in doing this process now, as opposed to when it was discussed before, is that the District has funds in reserve, (money from SIP). She wondered if we have enough money to begin this process now? She would like to move the decision whether to or not to consolidate up to Oct. 8. Member Bill Martin's suggestion is that the decision be made before the discussion for the new plan is begun.

Plan for Oct. 8 Board Meeting: It was agreed that each board member should call their own City Mayor and invite them to the Board Meeting. Members Ted vonBorstel and Liz Mills will attend the Grass Valley City Council Meeting and let them know the discussion will be open, and invite them to come. Member Bill Martin will call the mayor in Rufus, Member Verna Simantel will call the mayor in Wasco, and Chair Ken Melzer will contact the Mayor in Moro. Chair Ken Melzer will write a letter to the public, inviting them to the Board Meeting. Decision will be made after the October Board meeting about whether to invite public for input in November. The October Board Meeting will be held in the cafeteria at Sherman Jr. Sr. High School.

AGENDA ITEM FOR OCTOBER 2012 BOARD MEETING

Input session regarding discussion of K – 12 school consolidation. Chair Ken Melzer stressed that people in the community need to understand that the administration supports this plan, the board supports it, the staff supports it as well, and that community support is needed.

Superintendent Wes Owens asked the board to give Principals Brandon Hammond and Mike Somnis opportunity to speak this evening: Member Ted vonBorstel wanted Principal Somnis to give him the reality of what the gym needs are. Principal Somnis expressed the need for one more gym. He defended that using example of inclement weather, and not wanting late practices.

ENERGY SAVINGS CONTRACT PERFORMANCE UPDATE

Superintendent Wes Owens reviewed a quote from the contractor for painting the exterior of the SJSHS building.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Chair Ken Melzer adjourned the meeting at 8:45 PM.

Chair, Ken Melzer

Secretary, Linda Burnett